

How to Write Abstracts, Outlines, & Papers

J. Choe

Dept. of Energy Resources Engineering
Seoul National University

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Example of typical, but bad Abstract

A partial biography of the writer is given. The inadequate abstract is discussed. What should be covered by an abstract is considered. The importance of the abstract is described. Dictionary definitions of “abstract” are quoted. At the conclusion a revised abstract is presented.



Revised and good Abstract

The abstract is of utmost importance, for it is read by 10 to 500 times more people than hear or read the entire article. It should not be a mere recital of the subjects covered. Expressions such as “is discussed” and “is described” should *never* be included! The abstract should be a condensation and concentration of the *essential information* in the paper.

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Key Conclusion on Abstract

Abstract should be stand alone with key information, not about the paper!

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Eight Steps to develop an effective outline

1. Develop a central message of the manuscript
2. Define the materials and methods
3. Summarize the question(s) and problem(s)
4. Define the principal findings and results
5. Describe the conclusions and implications
6. Organize and group related ideas together
7. Identify the references that pertain to each point
8. Develop the introduction

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Twelve Steps to develop an effective first draft of your paper

1. Consolidate all the information
2. Target a journal
3. Start writing
4. Write quickly
5. Write in your own voice
6. Write without editing
7. Keep to the plan of your outline
8. Write the paper in parts
9. Put the first draft aside
10. Revise it
11. Revise for clarity and brevity
12. Be consistent

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Revision practice for abstracts

- ◆ Assigned as homework to revise a bad abstract in a technical journal
- ◆ Revision practice on each homework